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the people's attitudes. One must not venture under trees when there is lightning or go to sleep during the day under a walnut tree with its thick foliage (in Central and Southern Greece) or under a fig tree (farther south). A young woman from the Peloponnesos explained that Christ was sitting under a fig tree when he was taken, thus accounting, in her mind at least, for this taboo. As we shall soon see, the idea of fate, destiny, or necessity is strong today, as it was in classical Greece. Natural phenomena are important in helping one learn what is to come or in helping to ward off some impending evil or difficulty.

Plants to some extent aid in knowing what lies ahead. However, most of the blossoms, fragile and fragrant, appear for such a short period in the spring that they are enjoyed primarily for their beauty. Fruit trees in bloom are looked upon as a glorious miracle of color, and one is urged to go out of the way just to see a particularly beautiful tree, especially an almond tree in January. But there are some plants that are appreciated for more than their beauty.

In many parts of Greece belief in the good luck brought by a four-leafed clover is strong. No bullet can affect it, as shown by the following folk story:

> Once there was a man who had a silver tobacco case on which he had stuck a four-leafed clover. They put it up as a target and shot bullet after bullet but could not hit it. Afterwards they took away the clover and the case was easily pierced.

If a peasant from Northern Greece comes upon a form of the peony known as "The Holy Virgin's Hand" (*Tes Panagias to cheri*), he may remember that sprigs of it are thrown into the jug from which the water is poured for a woman in travail.[8] The name just as much as the properties of the herb is supposed to relieve the pains of labor. After the birth, the midwife is apt to hang cloves of garlic on the mother and the baby to ward off the Evil Eye. Garlic is so powerful against evil that, when one fears that an envious person will cast a spell upon the animal or baby or any other object of envy, one should say *skortha sta matia sou* (garlic in your eyes).

Anemones, hyacinths, basil, and thyme,[8] as well as the olive tree, the laurel, or the cypress, have stories associated with them which the old people tell to the children. Thus, nature seems intimate since so much of its handiwork carries deep and traditional meaning for the villager.

Animals have an even more special meaning. Both the occasional wild animal and the domestic animals reveal what to expect in the way of catastrophe or changing weather. For example, a man plowing in Central Greece may see a horsefly rest on someone and read into that simple occurrence the coming of a guest. If a person from the island of Spetsai catches a

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horsefly, he will put it in his wallet for good luck. Or if he is returning from the field and sees two crows quarreling while flying high over a house, he will be reminded of the belief that either the husband or the wife in that house will die soon. If he sees a crow pass in front of him from right to left, he will consider it a good omen; but if from left to right, he will expect bad luck. Should a rabbit or snake be in the path ahead, the peasant knows he must walk on in a straight line; should the road turn to the right or left, then the individual had better return home and start the journey the following day.

A spider walking on you will bring good luck, but if you come upon two snakes fighting and eating each other, a close relation of yours will die. Should you be a shepherd in the Vardousia Mountains of Central Greece, you would probably believe that the wild goats which graze in herds are guarded by the devil and that is why one can hear them make a whistling noise. Furthermore, these wild goats have the same notches cut in their ears as the tame ones kept by the shepherds, which to these mountaineers is proof positive that the devil must be the one who puts the markings there.

Seeing some insect or animal may bring to mind a story learned when a child. The bee, for instance, was once as white as cotton. When Adam and Eve met the devil in the Garden of Eden, it was the bee that saw them first and flew immediately to tell God the news. The devil, who was then holding a burning torch in his hand, ran and tried to catch the bee to keep her from her mission. He could not reach her, but as she was nearing God the devil from afar threw the flaming torch at her. The fire singed her so that she became black. God, who saw all of this, ordered the human beings to burn in the churches only the candles made from beeswax since the bee had proven to be the purest creature of all. I am often asked if these folk beliefs (cited here and in later sections of this book) are widely held or are only the relic in the mind of some aged person. It is safe to say that almost all of them are very much alive at the conversational level. People are aware of them, talk about them. Obviously, many act on them, while others do not. But they are a part of the general atmosphere, as is the belief common in America that a person should not walk under a ladder.

Such beliefs, stories, and personal experiences with many kinds of plants and animals reinforce the rural Greek's sense of intimacy with nature, which develops because of his constant exposure to the elements in the course of his daily life. The Greek peasant, like many farmers elsewhere, moves through a living landscape with which he communicates.

The same holds true for his view of the cosmos and the movement of the heavenly bodies.[7] One of the simplest and clearest descriptions of the latter is taken from an account of a village prepared by a singing master in

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Kokinya is a village of about one hundred houses not far from Kozane in Western Macedonia. The prefect of Kozane heard that a serious storm had hit the village and went out with his agriculturist to see what damage had been done, taking me along. As the agriculturist got estimates of crop destruction (50 percent of the wheat, 80 percent of the corn), we began to find out the peasants' explanations for this storm. One old man put it simply when he said, "it was God's will." • Even though the storm had occurred two days before, the people were still dazed at the thought of so much labor going to waste, to say nothing of the loss of the expected income from the crops. They did not seem bitter, nor altogether resigned. The visit of the nomarch (prefect) and his hour's discussion with the men brought a ray of hope. After many matters had been looked into, the nomarch asked just before he left: "I'm going to write up this report and make request for aid from the proper ministry. What are you people of Kokinya going to do?" They answered: "We are going to go to our fields, work with our vineyards. The rain has made new ravines. We must carry soil and fill in. Now we will have to work harder."

This statement reminded me of a conversation one evening on an apartment terrace halfway up Lykabettos Hill, a hill standing all by itself in the center of Athens. The Acropolis was clearly outlined in the moonlight, and the lights on the sea far in the distance told of the movement of boats in and out of the harbor. There we discussed the Greek peasant's idea of fate with a group of educated Greek friends — one of them the novelist Elias Venezis. As the backdrop for the present point of view we went back to the ancient idea of the three Fates and the classic themes of Greek tragedy.[19]

The Greeks with whom we were talking were careful to distinguish between the passive fatalism of the lands farther to the east and the active fatalism of the Greeks, pointing out that the Greek peasant made no abject surrender to nature or other forces about him. Even though the individual knows the odds are against him, he must stand up and face his destiny with dignity and correctness, whether the forces which would crush him show any mercy or not. We were reminded of the common saying, "syn Athena kai cheira kinei," which means, "with Athena move your own hand too." Thus it was neither incongruous nor contradictory to hear one Kokinya peasant say, "it is God's will," and to hear his neighbor say "now we will have to work harder."

On such a mental adjustment to the mountains, plains, and the sea, which we shall take up in order, is the survival of the Greek people largely based.

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342 "Are most of the houses in this village like this one?"

"Yes, only the priest and the teacher have two rooms in their homes, but people here are beginning to think about building bigger houses."

"How do you go about building a house such as this?"

"Oh, we get all the materials together and then call one of the builders who lives here in the village. It may take us quite a while to collect the material, depending upon the prices we get paid for our crops. We have to pay the master builder fifty drachmas a day; it usually takes him about fifteen days, since members of the family help him. We need him because he knows best how to place the stone in the walls so they will be firm."

The woman showed little interest in the actual details of construction, but quickly passed to the ceremonies connected with a new house. She pointed out that when the cornerstone was laid the family and relatives came together, cut the throat of a cock, and let the blood spill on the four corners of the house, selecting the eastern corner first. Just prior to this ceremony, money was thrown out to the workers. Customs vary, as we discovered, as to just what was buried in the cornerstone, but in this Peloponnesian village the family buried earth from a sacred place near the village where they had found a treasured ikon; they also included a small wooden cross and an ikon of the Holy Virgin. If the house is built as a dowry for the daughter, then some of her personal possessions such as a dress or a shoe are also included in the cornerstone. Usually a big dinner of roast lamb follows the laying of the cornerstone.

A second ceremony occurs when the topmost beam of the house is in place. The roof has not yet been laid, but this is the time for the family to bring presents to the workmen, who upon receiving a gift call out the name of the donor and wish him many years and a happy life. Later on, when the house is finished, the priest is called. He must be the first person to enter, after which he blesses the house and departs. Thereupon, for good luck, a young boy must be the first to step in.

Now the furniture can be installed and the family can settle down. The dowry chests, containing valuables saved up for the unmarried daughter, will be placed along a wall and the dowry blankets piled on top. "And unmarried girls must never sit on this chest or they will never get married," declared our informant.

Other furniture includes a small table along the wall over which is hung a large mirror. The family photographs are stuck into the edges of the mirror frame. Pictures also decorate the walls, as do pots and pans and other cooking utensils. Two or three chairs complete the roll call of furniture.

In other visits to village homes our attention was directed more to the court than to the interior. The weather would be warm and balmy and the vines in leaf. The family had in reality moved out of doors for the season,

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844 [178] [743] difficult. More and more, expectant mothers are going to the provincial hospitals, but even there a family atmosphere seems to reign because family members are welcome in the patient's room. In rural Greece, as elsewhere, there are many measures which can be taken supposedly to ease the agony of childbirth. They vary from the practice in the village of Derikovo in Central Greece, where some of the women advise the one in labor to drink a glass of water into which the tail of her eldest brother's coat has been dipped, to the practice in Southern Greece of drinking water from a glass where a budding flower was placed to the accompaniment of the reading of gospel passages. When the flower has opened, the water will supposedly ease the labor pains.

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846 The Greeks have a special word for the mother of a newborn infant — *lecho* — and give her solicitous treatment. The husband may insist that she observe the traditional eight days of staying in bed, although if there is much work to be done around the farm, she may in turn insist upon resuming various tasks as soon as she feels able. The other women of the household, or the neighbors, see to it that she observes many of the customs surrounding her activities and the care of the newborn infant. At night the child's clothes cannot be left outside, for it is believed that evil spirits will soil them. Throughout most of Greece the child's nails and hair are not cut before it is forty days old, when the clippings must be put in an envelope and preserved. In Aetolia anyone coming into the house must not go directly to see the lecho. He must sit for some time in another room and then enter her room; otherwise he brings her bad luck. Some families also insist that before a visitor enters the house, a burning charcoal be thrown on the doorstep for the newcomer to step over. In Artotina one is not supposed to enter the room of the mother in the afternoon or evening, although this taboo covers only the time after sunset in many other parts of Greece. Everywhere in rural Greece one encounters these customs surrounding the mother in the postnatal period and prohibitions which seek to forestall the visitation of any misfortune upon the infant.

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844 788 In some parts of Central Greece as soon as a woman has given birth, she must "take the blessing." Someone from the house takes a jug of fresh water to the priest, who "reads" to the water, which is then taken back to the lecho. She takes the blessing (water) and washes herself, after which all the people who were present in the house at the time of the birth also take the blessing.

851 856 754 As long as the child remains unbaptized, it is thought to grow more quickly and is not subject to the Evil Eye because it still belongs to the bad spirits. However, as one informant stated, "The parents are afraid and want to baptize the child as quickly as possible so that they can put it on the path of God. As long as it is unbaptized, it is not allowed to wear the cross or have a little icon."[9]

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second marriage is set for a Saturday evening. (This custom brings to mind a common Greek proverb: "Everything was wrong, and even the wedding was on Monday.")

On the Wednesday before the date of the marriage, both homes "start the leaven." In the evening the relatives of each home are present at the baking done from freshly milled flour and "untouched water." The kneading trough is placed in the middle of the room, and over this a girl and a boy hold a sieve through which the flour is sifted. Everybody is silent until, all at once, people start throwing coins into the sieve saying "Kalorizika" (Good luck). Three shots are fired to announce to the village that this has been done. The baking starts when enough flour has been sifted. Some of the people take dough which they smear onto the bride's or groom's face. After a late dinner, toward midnight, the people in the groom's home suggest going to the bride's home. When the two parties meet, there is dancing and singing and the firing of pistols. Later on, the groom's party goes back to his home to continue celebrations until daybreak.

On Friday the display of the dowry starts. Women from all over the village come in to look at it and bring with them basil, rice, and cotton "just for good luck." When the women have seen the dowry, the "filling of the sacks" starts after the mother has put a copper container into a large homespun sack. While the bride stows away her household equipment and her own clothes into these sacks, those present throw in coins. Once the sacks have been filled, the mattresses, covers, and cushions are placed in piles and the friends sprinkle everything with rice and pin sweet-smelling herbs in between the clothes. Then the women, and especially the young girls, start dancing in the bride's courtyard. On the same day the groom sends two boys around the village, one of whom carries a jug full of wine and the other a written invitation for relatives and friends to a dinner on the wedding day. The bride's father does the same. From Friday on, the special dishes are prepared: loaves of bread with symbolic patterns across the top, pies, meat, and wine. If a person is in mourning and is invited to the wedding dinner, he is obliged to take some food on Saturday evening.

On Saturday morning the bride calls the young girls "to help her get married." Some of her friends take Turkish delight, bonbons, and other sweets and go with these offerings to invite the rest of the young girls to the wedding.

On Sunday after the regular morning church service, people begin to gather in the homes of the bride and the groom. The girls go to the bride's home to form an honorary escort and dance in her yard, while the boys dance in the groom's yard. During this time, while the bride is getting dressed, a party goes from the groom's home to fetch the sponsor (koumbaros) who either rides or goes on foot to the groom's home. There a white flag, adorned with apples and sweet herbs, is hoisted. The koumbaros is always the groom's godfather or one of his sons if the godfather has died. If for some reason the godfather cannot be present, he gives his blessing and permits the groom to choose another "best man" or sponsor. When the koumbaros has arrived at the groom's home, the procession is ready to start for the bride's home.

First comes a young man carrying the flag, followed by the priest and the

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585 cross three times on her forehead. The procession then goes to the groom's house, and the young couple are the only ones who ride. The musicians have already arrived at the groom's house and start the music as the procession approaches. There is more shooting and the flag is now put on the groom's house. The bride, before she gets off the horse, throws an old piece of iron on the roof as a symbol of strength in her new home. The mother-in-law gives a ring biscuit cut crosswise. The bride holds it over her head and squeezes it into four pieces: one she eats, two she puts on her breast, and one she hands to her mother-in-law who offers her a glass of wine. She makes the sign of the cross with wine and returns the glass. After this a boy, both of whose parents are alive, is given her to hold. She kisses the child and gives him sweets and hangs a ring biscuit around his neck. Now the bride can dismount from her horse.

Her brother-in-law, or some other close relative of her husband, will take the bride into his arms, turn around three times, and then let her down. The dowry is unloaded and displayed. The tables are set. The wives of the relations have already brought baskets of food which are set on the table, and each small [609] family gathers around its basket. Any stranger present is allowed to sit at one of the tables. There is drinking, dancing, eating, singing. Later on, the other villagers who were not related to the groom or bride, and were therefore not invited to the wedding feast, will join the party in the courtyard or at a nearby threshing floor for a continuation of the festivities.

[606] At night, after the supper, the mother-in-law guides the couple to their room. On Monday morning she inspects the bride's nightgown to make sure that she was a virgin. Before lunchtime the bride takes a boy and goes to the fountain where she throws a coin into the water, fills a jug, and then returns. The boy retrieves the coin which belongs to him.

On Wednesday the couple gets up early and goes to the field. On the return the bride will carry on her back a bundle of wood or branches and follow her husband who leads the way back home. The first Sunday after the wedding the [574] bride will receive the female relations; the following Sunday the couple will go to church and after the service the bride returns the visits of these female kinfolk. At each home the housewife will call "cotton" to the bride, which means that she will give her a piece of cotton and will wish her "may you live and get old enough to see grandchildren." Then the marriage period is finished.

[184] Anyone even casually familiar with Greek life will realize that this authentic account differs in many respects from the wedding customs found in other parts of the country. For instance, in many villages the groom and [777] the bride go separately to the church, for it is considered bad luck for the groom to see the bride on the wedding day before meeting her at the altar. [608] Then, too, it is quite common to have both a male and female sponsor, one representing the bride's family and the other the groom's family. There are other details which are fairly common throughout the country. Supposing [515] that the wedding is to be at six o'clock in the evening, the bride will start her bath about three o'clock in the afternoon. After this, she is perfumed. Her friends and a "wise woman" do the dressing, although in some parts

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of Macedonia the bride's brother is supposed to help with the dressing. 585
Proximity to the city changes many of the traditional patterns. The bride,
for instance, may have her bridal dress made by a dressmaker and the dress- [294]
maker may be present at the time the bride dresses to be sure that the veil
is in proper place. Also, the bride may have gone to a beauty parlor to get [305]
a permanent wave. The frizzier her hair, the more beautiful she is thought [302]
to be. If she cannot get to a beauty parlor, her friends will put her hair into
curlers or will wet her hair and make waves. The bride's hair is combed
before she puts on her dress, and it is quite a trick to get the dress on with-
out mussing the hair. The wise woman or dressmaker will help her with [302]
her makeup: rouge, lipstick, much powder. The veil is pinned with two little
bunches of orange blossoms and, of course, the richer the bride, the fuller [292]
the gown and the longer the veil. White gloves are becoming more common,
as is a small bouquet. The bride's best friend must give her something old [777]
(perhaps a garter) to wear and the wise woman busies herself doing knots
of various kinds to control the fates in behalf of the bride.

The duties of the koumbaros vary from place to place. If there are two [608]
sponsors (normally, a married couple), the koumbara, or woman sponsor,
may be expected to buy two big white candles, quite expensive, and enough
silk material for the dress of the bride and for tying the candles with a bou-
quet of orange blossoms. One of the diversions in the ceremony in the
church is to watch the two small children holding these heavy candles and
to notice how frequently their inattention seems on the point of starting a
general conflagration.

There is also a ritual connected with the dance held at the bride's house 585
after the ceremony at the church. One of the fathers of the young couple 533
will throw some money into the musician's box so that he can lead the dance
in honor of the bride and can choose any dance that he likes. This dance 535
may last from six to ten minutes. Then the bride's nearest male relative will
pay the musicians and lead a dance in honor of the groom first and then
the bride. Then it is the turn of the koumbaros. This continues until each
one who wants to honor the couple will do the same; after this, the dance
turns into an ordinary one, and anybody who wants to lead can do so by
paying the musicians, thereby gaining the right to name the dance and there-
fore the music that is to be played.

There are wide variations, also, in the greeting given by the mother-in- 585
law to the bride when she first arrives. Sometimes, the mother-in-law puts
a dish in front of the daughter-in-law who breaks it; sometimes she gives [184]
an ax which the bride is to use in showing all present how well she can chop
wood. Then, too, instead of taking up the small boy, as the bride does in
Artotina, the boy may come and sit on her knee and receive a round piece [777]
of bread for supposedly bringing her good luck. In Kilkis, Macedonia, the
brother of the bride has a big round pie which he breaks on her head upon

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A Village Baptism

One ceremony which has deep meaning for the family members is the baptism of a recently arrived infant. First of all comes the selection of godparents, although this is usually determined by the custom of having those who were sponsors at the wedding also be godparents of the children which issue from that marriage. But if many children have come subsequently it is only fitting that the honor be given to someone else. The father is free to invite some notable, say a political figure from the area, to serve as godfather, an opportunity which few politicians pass up. On the other hand, if the couple is dissatisfied with the godparent who would normally be invited, it may follow traditional procedures to select another. An inquiry into these takes one deeply into folklore and belief in magic. When childlessness, stillbirth, or infant mortality is blamed upon the godparent, villagers assume that a new godparent might lead to better success. According to Chrysoula, the wise woman of Spetsai, her sister bore a child who died within twenty-four hours after birth, and later on she had a pseudo-pregnancy. In her desperation she prayed to the Virgin: "Please give me a child of either sex. If it is a girl I'll give her your name; if it is a boy I'll dedicate it to you but will have to give it the name of its paternal grandparent." This was on the morning of March 25 (Evangelismos Day); that afternoon she had intercourse with her husband and on Christmas Day a little girl was born. As soon as she was able, the mother picked up the baby, put the baby on the porch of the church dedicated to the Virgin, and waited to see who would discover the baby and, by so doing, be designated godparent. People standing around consider it lucky to be a godparent on such an occasion, and several may be inclined to volunteer. An especially eager person may throw a handkerchief ahead of a rival and thus stake out a claim. The mother watches from a distance. When the child has been taken into the church for the ceremony, she goes home to prepare sweets and other food for the baptismal feast.

The same procedure for gaining a new godparent as a replacement for the one who sponsored the wedding of the couple is followed in most parts of Greece but occurs only infrequently, since people reluctantly change their godparent ties. Once the godparents have been selected, the guests have to be invited — relatives and very close friends or, as was fortunate in my case, an interested foreigner who happens to be in the vicinity. The women of the household allow themselves a few days in advance to plan and prepare for the festive occasion. The church ceremony is a lively affair. If the child is baptized within forty days of birth, as it usually is, the mother does not attend, for she is still unclean. The principals in the ceremony are the priest, the infant, and the godparent, with the latter's responsibility supposedly extending to the spiritual oversight of the godchild, today a matter of

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considered so real that many villagers going outdoors after dark take both a light and a cross for protection. Nor should one do any washing of clothes during the Twelve Days, go to the fields to work, borrow from a neighbor, or believe in the efficacy of dreams since they will not come true at this time.[9]

After the Emmanuels have had their nameday on the twenty-sixth and the Stephens theirs on the twenty-seventh, the women start preparing the traditional New Year's Eve dishes. On the thirtieth special attention is given to the baking of the *vasilopita*, a special cake named in honor of Saint Basil (Hagios Vasilis), a very important figure. A coin has been placed in the cake, on the top of which the date of the year is written. Chestnuts and almonds are used for decorations.

On New Year's Eve, throughout the day, the children go around caroling again much as they did on Christmas Eve, but on this occasion it is St. Basil's kalenda. The children carry a highly decorated branch of the sorb-tree or sometimes the olive with which they tap people on the shoulder in order to wish them good luck during the year. In return they expect a gift such as dried fruit. The youngsters add a festive air to the day and help build up the emotional crescendo that becomes quite evident as evening approaches — everyone is anxious to find out what their luck will be for the coming year. Excitement is particularly keen around midnight with the cutting of the vasilopita; first, the head of the house cuts a piece of this cake for the Virgin, then one for the house, then one for the job that the head of the house does, then his own piece to be followed by one for his wife and each child in turn. Everyone is curious to find out in what piece the lucky coin will turn up. Should it be in the Virgin's piece, it will be placed on the household shrine, but if any member of the family finds it in his piece he feels fortunate indeed.

If the family members exchange any gifts, it is done at this special event on New Year's Eve and not at Christmas. In Northern Greece especially the villagers play cards to test their luck. If anyone loses he is apt to say, "If I lose at cards, I'll win during the year." Those who win say, "I'll be lucky."

The devout go to the New Year's Day church service at which the liturgy of St. Basil is employed, and when they come home they are careful to step into the house with their right foot; if they have brought a new icon from the church, the one carrying it will step into the house first. During the day the men pay calls on such village notables as the community president, the priest, the doctor, or the schoolteacher and are served wine with a sort of canape. The women, dressed in their very best, serve the guests. Students, soldiers, and others away from home try to get back to their village for at least a two- or three-day visit. On New Year's Day the card games are taken up again.

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The second, third, and fourth of January are ordinary working days, but on January 5 people expect a half-day off since it is Epiphany Eve, at which time children also sing the kalenda about the baptism of "the child of God." There is a five o'clock service in the morning at which occurs the first blessing of the waters. Those in attendance have brought jugs or cups for the blessed water which they take home to use in curing the sick or preventing the Evil Eye during the year. But on Epiphany itself occurs the most spectacular second blessing of the water, done in front of everybody at the church or near some body of water into which the cross is thrown. Swimmers are ready to dive in after it and struggle for its possession. The one who succeeds in gaining it is not only assured of good luck during the year but he can pass throughout the crowd and even the community to collect money from those solicited.

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On Epiphany the priest visits the homes of the parish to bless each room by sprinkling holy water there, thus guaranteeing that all kallikantzari[1] have been exorcised and chased back to their lairs beneath the earth until the next Twelve Days comes around.

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Easter brings with it a wealth of customs, a blend of the pagan and the Christian, which are lightened by the coming of spring and the renewal of nature. Although they are "all of a piece" in the peasant mind, they can be best understood by the outsider in terms of Carnival, Lent, and Holy Week.

Carnival begins nine weeks before Easter and runs for three weeks. The second week is climaxed by Meat Sunday and the third week by Cheese Sunday. This is the time for weddings which otherwise could not take place until after Easter; this is the time for masquerades, although these are less pronounced in the villages than in the cities; this is also the time when family groups get together for little feasts before the Great Fast starts forty days before Easter. The last two Saturdays of Carnival and the first Saturday of Lent are *psychosabbata*, or memorial days for the dead. On the Thursday of the middle week of Carnival, members of the family, bringing their own food with them, gather in the home of the eldest relative to have a special meal, and on this occasion they allow some dish to scorch on the stove and smell up the house in the belief that this will bring good luck. This day is called *tsichnopempti*, since *tsichna* stands for the odor of burning flesh.

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Meat Sunday is the eighth one before Easter (the villagers count Easter as one of the Sundays). On this day the people are supposed to start doing without meat products for the Lenten period. On the following Sunday, called Cheese Sunday, the forbidden foods are broadened to include milk products as well. This latter holiday is especially colorful in many parts of Greece, for on this day the village boys prepare piles of wood on various heights to be lit after dark. This is also the day for visiting older relatives

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1 [These are bad spirits – ANALYST]

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paid by the state as civil servants, and religious belief a part of national patriotism. Nothing really fundamental can be done in the nation down to the smallest commune without clerical interest and participation. This is not written law, but deep-seated custom.[6]

Greeks view contemporary events in terms of their own adaptation of New Testament teachings and claim that the Greek nation, though it has suffered many "Golgothas," has recovered from these disasters to experience a "resurrection" each time.[7] Such comparisons with the life and sufferings of Christ are also intelligible to the Greek peasant, who has little difficulty in identifying them with the sufferings of Greece through which the rest of the world will be saved. Greeks give episodes in Greek history, such as their defeat of the Italians in World War II and their fighting back the spread of Communism in postwar years, a political-religious interpretation highly charged with emotion because these touch upon what is sacred in the Greek national tradition — the unique contribution Greece has over and over again made to the preservation of Western civilization through the frequent ordeals she has endured.

The Village Priest and His Parish

An American walking down the street with a Greek friend is usually surprised when the Greek hits him on the shoulder and says, "I give you the priest." This act supposedly transfers to someone else the misfortune that might follow from meeting the *papas*, or priest, who passes dressed in his flowing black robes and his tall stovepipe brimless hat, and wearing a handsome black beard and his long hair neatly done up into a bun. Should he be accompanied by a woman, she is probably his wife, for in the Greek Orthodox Church there are both married and unmarried priests. The married priests can take the ordination vows after marriage, but no priest can marry after ordination. The married priests are usually the parish priests, and it is rare to find the village priest unmarried. On the other hand, the unmarried priest, recruited among the monks, can alone rise to high administrative positions in the church. He may, for instance, be a bishop over one of the sixty-seven dioceses or, if properly qualified, eventually be one of the twelve bishops comprising the Holy Synod which guides the church under the presidency of the Metropolitan of Athens, the actual head of the church. The Patriarch of Constantinople at Istanbul is the titular head, but this is more of a traditional and honorary office, since the Metropolitan is looked upon as the chief functionary. In Greece the king has no authority over the church.

In the village the parish priest, married as he is, settles down, digs his roots in deeply, so to speak. He knows that he has no opportunity for advancement in the church hierarchy; so there is no need for him to spend his time "politicking" for appointment to some choice position in the church

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

needed to pay the priests' salaries, with the difference coming from state revenue. Also, the local parishes have to pay an amount equal to 6 percent of their priest's salary to the bishop toward the retirement fund for the local priest.

For salary purposes, the priests are divided into four classes: those who have gone through the theological faculty of the university; those who have attended the seminary, perhaps one or two years beyond gymnasium; those who have no seminary but who have finished gymnasium; and those put in a miscellaneous category. There are apparently sufficient candidates for the priesthood now, and some effort is being made to fashion their curriculum to prepare them to serve village needs more effectively; even the older priests are encouraged to come back for periods of study. One member of the Holy Synod thought that the priests ought to know more about agriculture, economics, and first aid, so that they might play a more vital part in community life. His view of the priest's role was that "he is to help people with their problems of all kinds and settle any disputes among the villagers."

But what part does the village priest really play? As has already been indicated, the Greeks are ambivalent toward the priest.[9] "As an individual, he commands respect, and gives advice to those who seek it. However, he is also a figure of ridicule and of ill omen." [10] A great deal depends upon the personality of the priest himself. One informant told me that when he was a boy their village had had a wonderful priest who was very important. Today, even though the people are probably just as much attached to their religion, the present priest is not popular. In the course of an extended conversation with the people in a village near Volos, we asked what kind of priest they had. "Oh, our priest is from around Karpenesi. He has five children and is a good family man." He was not singled out for praise because of any priestly performance, but because of his conformity to basic village values. But children in that same village must have heard many, many times the local account of what happened to some monks who lived in a monastery not far from the village. This had been built in 1714 as an annex of a Mount Athos establishment, but in due course of time the monks became "naughty" in that they called to and teased the women who were on their way to work in the fields. Finally the villagers could stand this no longer, so the men took the monks to a rock overlooking the sea and told them to jump. The monks jumped and were never heard of again. The present priest, unlike the monks, is "a good family man."

Very persistent and widespread is the belief, already mentioned, that an encounter with the priest brings bad luck. If peasants starting on some new venture meet a priest, they will turn back home and not begin it on that day for fear of failure. Anyone who meets a priest, in addition to "giving" the bad luck to a companion by hitting him on the shoulder, can tie a knot

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

in a handkerchief, thereby putting the priest under his control so he will do no harm. But, bad luck or not, the priest is indispensable. At numerous repasts celebrating a christening, a nameday, or some other important event, we had to wait what seemed an interminable length of time because the priest could not arrive any earlier. Without him, nothing could get under way. One serious student of Greek rural life said: "In Greece when a priest is missing, it is a great calamity, for the Greek is not used to praying by himself without a priest." [11] In earlier days when the belief in vampires was much more widespread than today, it was the priest, the minister of God, who alone had any power over them. He could calm the fears of the people.

The responsibility for the local parish does not fall entirely upon the priest, although the chief responsibility is his. There is a church board, consisting of three to five members, with the priest as president. The nominations for this board are submitted to the bishop by the priest, and the bishop designates them as official members of the board. One member of the board is the treasurer. When these local officials are asked just what their duties are, they usually include in their replies: to help the priest, to look after the finances, and to care for the church building. This board has as one of its chief duties the sale of the candles in the church vestibule and can use the proceeds of the sale for local church needs. In most communities it is considered a great honor to serve as a member of this board, although this position requires much work and frequently has more responsibility than the presidency of the local cooperative.

A recent development is the growth of the Sunday school, held after the regular morning service. Young boys, girls, and a few women are usually found in attendance, although young people up to the age of twenty are urged to attend. Throughout much of Greece the priest gives the instruction, although in Northern Greece we found many villages where the teacher had taken over this extra duty. Usually the same lesson is given to all age groups at the same time. It is customary in some places, such as the Attic villages we visited, for the school to be held on a weekday by the teacher, in which case it was not called Sunday school but "the preaching school."

The heart, however, of the Greek Orthodox Church — as of many other Christian bodies — is the Sunday-morning Mass. Anyone attending cannot help but notice the building itself, usually in the shape of a Greek cross, with the ends terminating in apses. Over the center there is a dome representing heaven. In front, the altar screen (*eikonostasion*), on which one finds the icons or pictures of various saints, separates the altar (*vema*), which no woman can enter, from the nave, where the worshippers congregate.[12] The priest moves back and forth between altar and nave in what seems a random manner to the uninitiated. As he turns to face the altar,

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

tinue at only a slightly diminished rate. But the villagers' conception of the separation as a drama of great significance is based on the change in point of view which accompanies it. Henceforth, each small family is free to develop its own resources as it wishes. The different personalities of the brothers and their wives manifest themselves in the way they administer their property and raise their children, and, most importantly each brother can now freely give his entire loyalty to his own wife and children and consider all new situations from the standpoint of how they will affect the smaller unit. He is now at liberty, in the village view, to make decisions advantageous to himself, even at the expense of his brothers. The burden of consideration for the welfare of others has been lifted and the brothers are now as free as the rest of the villagers to be rivals of each other. This is not to say that all kinship rights and obligations towards one's adult brothers and sisters and their children disappear, but rather that the emphasis of most intense concern shifts at the time of property division. Indeed, it is generally agreed that the longer harmonious relations among the brothers can be maintained, the better. As a matter of fact, it is just for the sake of keeping good relations that the villagers claim they draw lots for the patrimony. They explain that by so doing, they can manage the business of dividing the property *me aghapi* (with love). No brother can blame any other for the particular share he happened to draw.

The villagers take it for granted that neither impartiality nor altruism is possible in situations which involve one's own interests. They do not believe that anyone, even one's own brother, can act fairly out of principle. Therefore, they feel, some mechanism is required to enforce equity. The strength of their mistrust of the fairness of others is illustrated by a villager's response to a question as to why the mother was not invited into the deliberations. (Mothers who are still active normally have the respect of their adult sons and participate in other kinds of decisions.) The son explained that it was because she might show favoritism toward one of the sons. This explanation was given in spite of the fact that the lot system effectively makes it impossible for anyone to implement favoritism. It is chance that makes the decision as to who gets which share and when faced with the operation of uncontrollable forces of the universe, the Greek villagers say, "*Ti na kanume,*" "What can we do?" From their point of view, adverse decisions left to chance are easier to bear than decisions made by self-seeking humans. Therefore, in situations over which they could have control, they prefer, if possible, to rearrange the situation into one in which chance, or fate, if you will, makes the final decision.

In the late 1950's, the number of households in which any married son was still living with his father and mother was small, and there were none in which several married sons were living this way. The reasons for this are first, the decreasing number of sons who are remaining farmers; second, the age distribution of Vasilika's male population (relatively few men in the marriageable age group); and third, the increasing age for marriage even of farming sons. Five of Vasilika's elementary family households were the result of the separation of two sets of brothers in the early 1950's. In Vasilika, therefore, the exist-

2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

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Human Relations[1]

Attitudes Toward Man and Nature

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IF IT WERE NECESSARY to describe the nature of the villagers' feelings with respect to each other and the world in one word, that word would be "tension." Indeed, in the first chapter, the metaphor of Vasilika as a setting for a series of family dramas was used. The metaphor has a special aptness because it hints at the essential quality of drama—tension created by some kind of struggle. John Peristiany speaks of the agonistic quality of relationships among the Cypriot villagers he knows—agonistic in the sense of the ancient Greek word *agon* (match or struggle). This word is equally useful for Vasilika, although the contests do not appear to have quite the intensity of those described for Cyprus. Nevertheless, in Vasilika, when one walks through the fields and asks how the work is going, the common response is *"Palevume,"* "We are wrestling." Such an answer is not a cliché in which the literal meaning is lost. The villagers can amplify with further comments on their perpetual contest with soil, weather, and machinery. Man does not always win, in their view, but he is obligated to do his best and to use skill in the struggle. In contemporary Vasilika, the skill involves knowledge of naturally efficient means, and anyone who does not do his best in this sense is unintelligent and deserves to lose the battle. Those who try may still fail, and then the villagers turn to fate or to God's will as an explanation. But an appeal to fate or to God is never an excuse for neglecting actions which are humanly possible, and sometimes this is overtly expressed. For example, one farmer, at a time of unseasonable drought, remarked as he looked at his tobacco fields, "I won't make the sign of the cross, I'll bring my pump over here and irrigate the field." His intent was not blasphemous; he was not an irreligious man from the standpoint of village beliefs and practices. Rather, the farmer was expressing an explicit attitude in

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[1] Lee (1953) is especially relevant to this chapter, and is strongly recommended for further discussion.

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

village culture: man must use human means toward human ends, and this is his first obligation not only to himself but to God.

In Vasilika, the same tension—the sense of a contest, of struggle, of agony, of a kind of pushing and pulling—is also a feature of a large number of encounters with other human beings. In earlier discussions I referred to the economic rivalries among families in the village and to the efforts to keep family activities private to the point where a kind of espionage is practiced by all the villagers to uncover secrets. These contests we may now understand as one manifestation of the agonistic quality of many human relationships within the village. But seemingly perpetual battles require an occasional respite; the nervous vitality which they drain must be replenished. In Vasilika, some relationships within the family seem to contribute the respite and the energy to go on fighting the battles, whereas others appear to create the sense that perpetual struggle, principally outside the family, is a part of life. The family both starts the battle and also manufactures and distributes the weapons with which to fight it.

What is the ultimate aim of the battle, if I may continue the metaphor? It would seem that each man and woman seeks for identity, for a concept of self, and given the conditions of Greek village culture and its values, the search is carried on by pitting oneself against another, or against fate. One learns to know oneself primarily by contrast with others; and therefore the maintenance of some difference is a necessity. Contrasts, and the tension contrasts create, become expected and desired. Without change and variation the villagers lose their sense of life. But the need to engage in perptual struggle is an emotional burden, especially because there must be some who lose in the contests. A man is not completely disgraced in the villagers' view, however, if he is bested in an encounter with another man, provided that he was willing to engage himself in the struggle in the first place and showed skill in his conduct of it. Just as agricultural failure is attributable to uncontrollable forces only if a man did his physical best, so failure in human relations is attributable to some other force only if a man has first made a creditable effort. It would seem that it is not the outcome but the continuing *aghonia* that gives a village man or woman the feeling that he is a functioning human being, that he has an identity, that he is alive. *"Perazmena, ksehazmena,"* "What is past is forgotten," the villagers say, and although they say so mostly in connection with unpleasantness, the saying is equally applicable to victories. For both victory and defeat are shortlived; a new area of battle constantly supersedes the old.

This struggle is not something which is entered into as a new pattern when men and women take on the responsibilities of a family, after a childhood spent without it. On the contrary, Vasilika's culture is one of those in which there is a continuity in the behavior and attitudes expected of children, adolescents, and adults. There are no sharp breaks; from their earliest days the upbringing of children plunges them into the role of agonist, and skills for functioning in this fashion are acquired in all stages of a child's development.

The villagers assume that intelligence and self-control are basic human qualities which differentiate men from animals. The villagers are in many ways

2: Friedl E-5 (1955-1959) 963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

a glimpse of the stranger. Instead of ignoring the child's discomfort, the mother went over to her saying, in a sarcastic tone, "Why don't you come out and show the lady your beautiful clean dress?" As we reached the little girl, the mother pulled at the child's dress and said, "See, Mrs. Ernestine, how clean she is?" And she said to the child, "Are you afraid to show yourself?" The child squirmed on the window ledge, held her fist to her mouth, and stared at me through these proceedings. She said nothing.

When older children misbehaved, parents sometimes threatened to tell the schoolteacher what they had done, with the implication that they would be both disgraced and punished.

Shame continues as a noticeable attribute of women throughout their lives. But as boys get older, an effort is made to enhance another component of their internal behavior, their love of honor (*filotimo*). A man expresses his masculinity by his love of honor; it is a necessary component of his self-esteem or *amour propre*. In Vasilika, a man gives expression to his *filotimo* by his fulfillment of his obligations to his family and especially to his women, by his ability to participate adequately in the daily give-and-take with other men, and by his knowledge of appropriate behavior toward visitors and guests of higher social position. A particular incident will illustrate: During a conversation with a bank manager in his town office, we were interrupted by a villager who wanted to talk to the manager. The manager told him kindly that he was busy; at a second interruption by the same man, the manager said to the villager, "Please leave us alone; don't you see I have guests here; have you no *filotimo?*" The man left immediately and did not return. The official had appealed to the man's own self-esteem to influence a change in his behavior. Moreover, if he had had to reprimand the man more fully before foreigners, the manager and the culprit would both have lacked *filotimo* as Greeks.

Self-esteem is also maintained in the village by a tendency to attribute failures to some outer conditions rather than to any personal inadequacy. If anything goes wrong, a man is most likely to say he did not have the proper equipment to do the job, or he says, *"Poz na ksero egho?"* "How was I to know?" or it is the fault of the government, or he has been deceived. Man's abilities, the villagers seem to believe, are always limited by the force of circumstances not entirely under his control—he has unexpected illnesses, he has more daughters than sons, rains come when crops need sun, governments establish regulations on matters in which he was not consulted; and since events such as these are part of the human condition, one or another of them is likely to be available for the explanation of any one man's shortcomings. *"O kakomiros,"* "the ill-fated one," the villagers may say of a man even in connection with routine mishaps. It is an epithet used often in the village and represents a compassion which does not derogate from the *filotimo* of the person referred to and counter-balances, to some extent, the frequent ridicule of the behavior of others.

Just as in Vasilika the avoidance of self-blame does not have the connotation of irresponsibility, so self-praise does not have the connotation of boasting. It is, rather, a necessary part of the maintenance of self-esteem. A host praises the food he is serving as he offers it to a guest; he talks of the accomplishments

/42 cont./
to fight the disease after it appeared rather than to cure the source of the disease. 744

The main causes for the death of children were the irregular feeding, intestinal diseases, malaria, lack of nutritive food and long hours of work of the parents that caused them to neglect their children. 164 165

Due to the cost of medicine the people called the doctor only when it is too late for him to do anything. "It was the will of God to give and take." This is the usual answer that one would hear. The cost of medical bills range from $12 to $35, even though the local doctor is free of charge. 758 [777] [511]

/43/ The care of the aged rests solely on their sons. According to tradition the aged are the head of the family until they die and due care and respect should be paid to them so as to get their blessings before their death. The aged who are unable to do any kind of work are cared by their closest relatives. It is a part of their religious duties to respect and care for the aged. 888 593

PART III.

Earning of Living. The farming is a subsistence type of farming. The people barely make their living and on lean years they have to borrow heavily from the Agricultural Bank or from the local city merchants. The following inventory which was taken from a representative farmer shows more or less the farm enterprise. 241 511

Inventory at the beginning of the year. 511
176 drachmas = $1 1 Oke = 2.82 pounds. [436] [804]

A. Condition of the family.
Members of the family 4 - 2 females and 2 males.
Members below 14 years of age 1, above sixty none.

/75 cont./

to read and write. Besides this, agricultural lectures were given to the farmers by the agriculturist of the area during the winter months on different topics concerning the farming life of the area. A series of 5 lectures were organized by the priest of the village on different topics such as history, travel, biography, and inventions. Thus the farmers of Megali Vrisi had an ample chance to get whatever they could from these different agencies.

873 [544] [242] [793]

/76/ Part VII Religion

Magic. The people of Megali Vrisi, due to numerous activities of an educational character that have been established there, find themselves in a transition period of trying to put aside old beliefs and adopt new ones. They still believe that certain people in the village have power to command the spirits and perform miracles. A young man who thinks that his sweetheart does not like him finds as an outlet the consultation of magicians and their command of the spirits to change her mind. If a member of the family is in a foreign country or on travel the magicians are asked to order the spirits to protect them. A pregnant woman desiring to give birth to a boy instead of a girl asks the magicians to act favorably to her desires. The people who perform the role of a magician are old women with suspicious looks. The same women may act as mid-wives, too.

789 [178] [832] [484] [843] [791] [759]

Certain signs handed down from generation to generation are believed to be true. A black cat crossing the road is thought a bad sign. If you meet a priest early in the morning, they think the whole day will be filled with failures. Dogs crying mean somebody is going /77/ to die in the neighborhood. When the eyelid moves fast some good news is coming.

777 [763]

The above are a few of the good and bad luck signs.

Religious beliefs. Almost every farmer has a Saint in whom he believes strongly. The ikon of the Saint in front of which he

353 778 776

342 stables and storage rooms, and in the upper story the living quarters with a verandah, a balcony, and a sink; over them is a flat roof of tiles. The Albanian form of the square fortified tower is to be seen
177 on larger warehouses (Figure 3). The interior displays the customary
[352] simple furnishing of the Balkan dwelling; the semicircular chair in
[415] Figure 14 is reminiscent of the Albanian styles, while its horn-shaped supports remind one of Turkish influence. The weaving loom and the hatter's bow (Figure 11) that is used for the cleaning of wool and of cotton, have probably come to this country from the Orient, even though the hatter's bow is ancient European (compare the Plate, Estonians II). The baking bell shown in Figure 7, the bagpipes shown in Figure 6, the incense vessel shown in Figure 17, the wooden plow,
[492] shown in Figure 15, which is drawn by the team of oxen that are driven on by a goad (not a whip) and which are harnessed with a neck yoke--all these are universally characteristic of the Balkans. The riding donkey shown in Figure 12, on the other hand, points to the Orient.
[777] Figures 8 to 9 are illustrations of protective charms--the horse's skull is reminiscent of Kirghiz customs, compare volume 1 of this atlas, Plate, Kirghiz I, Figure 13, that are based upon the knowledge of spiritual forces which are everywhere alive, which are effective in everything that is and has being, and can be utilized for magical purposes, both in a good as well as in a bad sense.

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/105: Illustrations/

/106/ The Macedonians

II.

000 1. Men and women from western Macedonia. 2. Woman from

[See 2. Karutz, E1 Europe, Cat. 116, p. 73a --Analyst]